

PHILOSOPHY NEWSLETTER

Welcome Message from the Chair - Dr. Kevin Schilbrack

Welcome back! The academic study of philosophy at ASU is poised to have a great year. We have a new permanent member of the faculty, Dr. Rick Elmore. Find out about his classes and the philosophical questions he is working on in this newsletter.

There is a lot going on in our program. The Philosophy and Film club is watching and discussing a movie every Tuesday. The Philosophy Club has invited speakers and discussions every week. They have Politics as their September theme, Aesthetics in October, and Philosophy of Religion in November. Knock on Dr. Elmore's door (Greer 115A) to hear more about how to join them. The Secular Appalachian Student Society is a social group for students interested in humanism, and they are sponsoring a series of meetings, lectures, and social activities. To hear more, contact Dr. Bartel (Greer 115B). And Dr. Rardin is organizing a colloquium lecture series: watch for announcements about talks on pessimism, hell, and the Bible in the library. If you are interested in classes about medical ethics, the environment, how the mind works, feminism, prisons and punishment, and how the whole world hangs together – come see the posters advertising our spring classes on the board in Greer. And if I can answer any questions you have about the Philosophy major or minor, please come see me in Greer 114.

New Faculty Profile - Dr. Rick Elmore



My name is Dr. Rick Elmore. I'm a new Assistant Professor of Philosophy here at Appalachian State. I research and teach primarily in the areas of 20th century French philosophy, critical theory, ethics, social political philosophy, environmental philosophy, and realism. My articles and essays have appeared in *Politics & Policy*, *Symplokē*, *BioShock Infinite* (Routledge), and *The Aesthetic Ground of Critical Theory* (Rowman and Littlefield), alongside entries in the *Meillassoux Dictionary* and the *Jean-Luc Nancy Dictionary*.

One of the guiding questions of my work is how political, ethical, and environmental systems and institutions situate themselves in relation to violence, that is, to issues of inclusion, exclusion, power, force, law, policing, and normativity. Basically, I've always been interested in how systems establish and enforce their rules, and much of my work deals with questions of violence in the fields of politics and ethics. However, I'm also interested in how systems like language and even philosophy itself contain rules, policing, and, therefore, certain kinds of violence. These were some of the kinds of questions that first got me interested in studying philosophy, and I've been lucky enough to make a career out of following them out.

I am originally from North Carolina and did my undergraduate degree here at ASU. After transferring to App State from a community college, I explored several majors, including music, political science, and history before settling on philosophy. The thing that drew me to philosophy was that it allowed me to pursue my wider interests in things like music, politics, history, and economics all in one degree, while at the same time giving me a chance to hone my critical thinking, public speaking, and writing skills. Let's face it, philosophy is kind of the total package when it comes to what you can think about and do. I did my graduate work at DePaul University in Chicago where I completed my PhD in 2012. Before coming to ASU last fall as a lecturer in philosophy, I was a visiting professor at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. In addition to my interests in philosophy, I'm also a huge sports fan and avid gamer. I look forward to getting to know all of you over the coming semesters, and I'm thrilled to be back in Boone.

MAJORS PROFILE

Quentin Williams



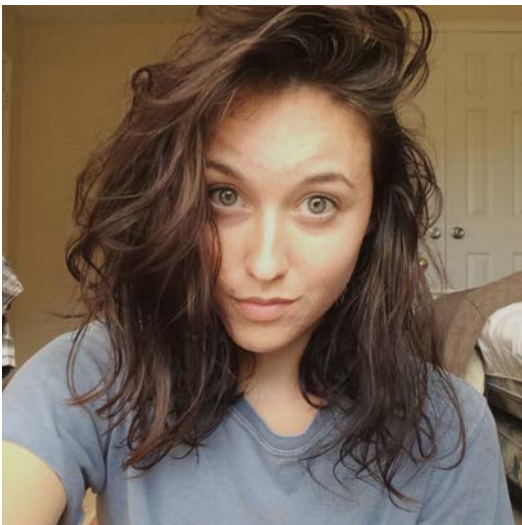
"I have heard it described before that philosophy is the "first science". This may seem like an odd statement to some, in particular to those who consider the modern scientific enterprise to be the greatest search for understanding. Some may find philosophy useless, possibly citing reasons that claim it to be abstract to a fault, or that it is made obsolete by the proliferation of the scientific method. Although, I think these criticisms (and possibly all dismissals of philosophy) are misguided. What faculty does one employ in seeking to dismiss philosophy? Why is it that many people believe the scientific method is the best way of developing reliable knowledge about the world? What makes a particular thing more or less obsolete than another?

I think the unavoidable conclusion is this: to abandon these criticisms and admit to a fundamental assumption of the usefulness of philosophy. Philosophy is ultimately concerned with the critical analysis of reasons for why one may believe the world is the way that it is. Such analysis involves rational capacities that preclude strict scientific

enquiry. As such, to give reasons for why one thinks philosophy is obsolete, or why the scientific method provides highly reliable beliefs about the world, one must ultimately appeal to what is proper to philosophy: the critical analysis of reasons. Given this, I think it is safe to identify philosophy as the "first science" in that all knowledge is ultimately subject to it. From this, we begin to see how relevant philosophy truly is: it is the fundamental process by which one seeks to discover reality.

While convinced of the overall importance of the philosophical enterprise, I am particularly interested in rationalism and epistemological first principles, including the extent to which logical analysis can provide reliable frameworks of understanding. It is my dream to study in the British Isles and to one day have the opportunity to teach the value of this "first science" to others."

Lauren Wilson



"Art has always been a big part of my life. Because of my struggles with school growing up art was the thing that helped me the most. So, when I discovered philosophy I found it as a way I could add more meaning to my artwork. Unfortunately through the stress of having a future job and the doubt of others I found myself in a different major. Although this major was seen to have a higher guarantee of a job at the end of it, I felt that it wasn't teaching me about how things actually work. I didn't want my artwork to sell because I was good at selling I wanted it to sell because people actually wanted it, because it showed them something about the world they hadn't seen before. I knew the major I was in wouldn't be able to teach me these things and I soon found it to be a waste of my time. I am now in philosophy again, as well as a double in psychology, because of this wanting to know how things actually work. It has become a very important concept for me and that a good foundation in learning should be something that is required so that people can learn and come up with ideas on their own. Art was the thing I could turn to growing up when I was failing at school but with this struggle I have found a passion in the way education works and the different ways people

gain knowledge. Because philosophy makes you think and teaches you how to organize your thoughts to have a sturdy foundation I believe it will teach me the most about what I am really interested in."

Majors Cont'd

Ryann Greene



"My name is Ryann Greene. Currently, I am enrolled at Appalachian State University seeking degrees in Philosophy as well as English. The university life here in Boone is a complete 180 from what I have experienced prior in Wilmington. With that being said I feel as if App is more of my element and I am glad to have made the transition here. As time goes by I am hoping to immerse myself more into the school and town, that way I can leave having had the full Appalchian experience.

My reasons for choosing both English and Philosophy as majors stem back to the the large amount of time I spent reading as a child. Because my family moved around constantly I was exposed to numerous environments as well as people. I would consider this aspect of

my youth to be a fundamental reason for my interests in understanding not only other people, but also their purpose. interested in. Since working on my major, I have not only expanded my reading, but have also become more comfortable expressing my ideas. I am primarily interested in free will and ethics, but I am always interested in discussing and learning more about any topic."

Liam O'Mahony

"My name is Liam O'Mahony, and I am a sophomore from Graham, NC. Though I entered as a Political Science major, a class in ethics with Dr. Ruble turned me onto the subject of philosophy. I am fascinated by the coexistence of ambiguity and of deeply held opinions in philosophy. While can never truly be right, one who has given a question a great deal of thought will readily defend his own opinion. I am interested in social philosophy and political philosophy specifically, as the connection, as well as the divide, between the written laws of states and ethical and moral principles is absolutely engrossing. After graduation, I hope to attend law school, preferably at one of the top two institutions in New York City. Careers in politics, trial law and many other fields related to law are among the options I am considering, though I certainly have a while to ponder these options."

Sally DeFelice



"Hey Mountaineers! My name is Sally DeFelice and I am a senior Philosophy & Psychology double major with a minor in Sociology. As you can probably tell, I am really into the social sciences and I am really bad at making decisions. My main interests lie heavily in human interactions: how people interact (or fail to interact) with each other,

with animals, with their environment, and then further what drives those interactions, and the results of those interactions for all that are involved. Through my studies within both Psychology (which focuses on the dynamic of the individual) and Sociology (which focuses on the dynamic of the group), I eventually realized while studying abroad in Paris and Rome with Dr. Kwong and Dr. Reed that Philosophy is, of course, at the base of this interest."

Mae Rukstalis

"My name is Mae Rukstalis and I am a transfer philosophy major from St. Mary's College of Maryland where I studied philosophy and neuroscience. Deeply influenced by my freshman year seminar, The Self and the Strange, I have always been interested in why humans behave and interact with others in the ways we do. Through philosophy I have been able to study how philosophical narratives manifest in human behaviors, which in turn construct social structures that allow both positive and negative behaviors towards the other to permeate.



I would consider myself to be a feminist philosopher, most passionate about justice models in societies and how oppression and marginalization manifest among group lines. I am hoping to pursue a career in advocacy law. I worked as an advocate at my previous college for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and am planning to continue this as a career path, branching out to work with other marginalized individuals and groups! I am excited to be continuing my journey here at App!"

Faculty Research Interests

Dr. Jack Kwong

Over the summer, my article "Open-Mindedness as Engagement" was accepted for publication by *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* (see abstract below). Additionally, I completed a project that examined the connection between open-mindedness and truth. Currently, I am working on several projects: the metaphysics of human kinds and the idea of "making up people", the nature of sexual perversion, and hope as an intellectual virtue.

Abstract - Open-Mindedness as Engagement

Open-mindedness is an under-explored topic in virtue epistemology, despite its assumed importance for the field. Questions about it abound and need to be answered. For example, what sort of intellectual activities are central to it? Can one be open-minded about one's firmly held beliefs? Why should we strive to be open-minded? This paper aims to shed light on these and other pertinent issues. In particular, it proposes a view that construes open-mindedness as engagement, that is, a willingness to entertain novel ideas in one's cognitive space and to accord them serious consideration.

Dr. Jesse Taylor

"Values, Punishment and Its Moral Justification" (Delivered at the "International Philosophical Forum on Values" conference in China in May)

I argue that the idea of 'values' envelops the full gamut of human predilections, not simply those we might wish to incorporate into a normative moral system or aesthetic ideals of goodness. In as much as we strive for goodness so called, it is clear that we continue to possess characteristics that we hope to transform. I call such characteristics 'values of vice'. Accordingly, I argue that the question 'punishment' cannot be fully articulated in terms of its moral justification, since as we punish, our values of vice are as much on display as our moral values. However, most contemporary approaches to the issue of punishment view it through the lens of morality and law. Such approaches are, therefore, too narrow. In the works of John Rawls, for example, there is a clear differentiation between retaliation and punishment. He identifies punishment with a system of justice, whereas retaliation stems from anger or other emotional springs not related to justice as such. Thom Brooks' recent book on punishment also commits him to a conception that is confined to law. I argue, that in punishing, the values we manifest are not merely those confined to justice and law. Anger, sport, hatred and other facts about us are also brought to light as we punish. Accordingly, the virtue of humility should be visited upon us as the need to punish is required.

Dr. Kim Hall

Professor of Philosophy and Director of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies

PUBLICATIONS: "New Conversations in Feminist Disability Studies: Feminism, Philosophy, and Borders," Editor's Introduction to guest edited special issue of *Hypatia: Journal of Feminist Philosophy* titled *New Conversations in Feminist Disability Studies* 30.1 (appeared in print in February 2015)

"Toward a Queer Crip Feminist Politics of Food," an article published in *philoSOPHIA: A Journal of Continental Feminism* 14.2 (appeared in print in spring 2015)

"Philosophy, Religion, Race, and Queerness: A Question of Accommodation or Access," an article published in *Philosophical Topics* 41.2 (appeared in print in summer 2015).

My guest edited *New Conversations in Feminist Disability Studies*, a special issue of *Hypatia: Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, appeared in print in February 2015. In addition to the Guest Editor's introduction, there are 16 articles, 3 musings, and 1 book review essay in the special issue. Other book reviews were published online only.

"Gender," an essay published in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, eds. David Serlin, Rachel Adams and Benjamin Reiss (New York: New York University Press) -- appeared in print in fall 2015.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS: "Crippling Sustainability, Realizing Food Justice." Society for Disability Studies, Atlanta, GA, June 2015.

- "Thinking Intersectionally about Trigger Warnings." Exploring Collaborative Contestations and Diversifying Philosophy conference sponsored by *Hypatia* and the APA Committee on the Status of Women, Villanova University, May 2015.

- "Crippling Philosophy." Exploring Collaborative Contestations and Diversifying Philosophy conference sponsored by *Hypatia* and the APA Committee on the Status of Women, Villanova University, May 2015.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE: Board of Associate Editors, *Hypatia: Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, elected member.

- Editorial Board, *Queer Studies in Media and Popular Culture*, invited member.

Dr. Patrick Rardin

I am currently studying Jody Azzouni's claim that abstract

entities can be truly denied real existence with a first-order existence predicate. My focus is on how he answers the Humean and Kantian challenges. The Humean challenge is to identify a distinct impression of existence and to prove that it is inseparable from all and only those things we believe to really exist. The Kantian challenge is to find an existence criterion which yield truths when appended to denoting terms and falsehoods when appended to non-denoting terms.

My study spans the body of Azzouni's work beginning with *Metaphysical Myths and Mathematical Practices* (1994) and culminating in his book *Semantic Perception: How the Illusion of a Common Language Arises and Persists* (2013). The later book contains a phenomenology of language perception. It claims that ordinary language predicates are perceived as objects with the monadic meaning property of referring. I am presently developing two arguments to prove that some abstract entities cannot be truly denied real existence with Azzouni's first-order existence predicate.

The first argument is this. An existence predicate having only the monadic property of referring is understood at best as a second-order predicate that is true of all first-order predicates. Therefore, that existence predicate cannot truly deny that abstract entities really exist.

Here is a sketch of the second argument. Azzouni frames a first-order use of tokens of 'exists' by meeting the Humean and Kantian challenges. Azzouni calls the impression we experience when we believe that something really exists ontic frisson (or angst). The ontic frisson is caused by the first-order use of tokens of 'exists' only in epistemic contexts because the tokens are invariably conceptually isolated (i.e., lack usage stereotypes). To meet the Kantian challenge the first-order use of 'exists' is assimilated to the use of all other first-order predicate tokens by arguing that it is criterion transcendent (lacking meaning entailments). All told, there is a troubling implication. The ontic frisson we actually experience in epistemic contexts seems equally strong whether we come to believe abstract entities or physical entities exist. Azzouni's only recourse for nullifying the ontic frisson when the beliefs are about abstract entities is to commit a version of the epistemic fallacy. It says that statements about real existence can be identified with certain selective statements about our knowledge of what exists. Hence, abstract entities cannot be truly denied real existence with Azzouni's first-order use of 'exists' whenever any relevant epistemic context leads us to believe they do exist.

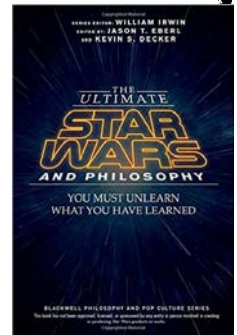
I hope to present this study along with a general conclusion at the joint NCPS/SCSP meeting being held here at Appalachian this coming February 26-27.

Dr. Danny Malloy

"Light Side, Dark Side, and Switching Sides," *The*

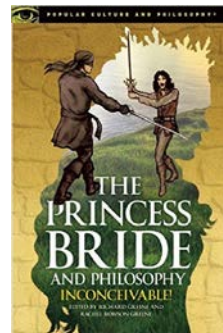
Ultimate Star Wars and Philosophy (October 2015)

This chapter examines some of the acts of loyalty and betrayal that define the Star Wars universe to better understand the nature and value of loyalty. I argue that loyalty itself has no moral value, partially because it can lead with equal ease to moral or immoral actions. However, loyalty considered as a virtue represents a combination of praiseworthy traits: commitment, dedication, and selflessness.



"The Magic of a Promise," *The Princess Bride* and Philosophy (November 2016)

This chapter examines the broken and unbroken



promises that shape *The Princess Bride* in an attempt to answer two basic questions: what is a promise? And why should we keep our promises? I argue that the concept of a promise is broad, and covers a wide variety of actions beyond explicit promises and contracts. I also present a case that it is the link between the promises we make and our self-respect

that makes promises binding.

Dr. Anna Cremaldi

My attention was pulled in several directions over the summer. I co-authored a paper with Dr. Bartel on the ethics of pornography. I also completed a paper on the notion of love, or *philia*, as a metaphysical principle in Aristotle's ethics. I am currently working on two projects: one concerning the different conceptions of scientific and technical expertise in the classical world, with particular emphasis on ancient medicine. My second project is to investigate an unusual argument Aristotle makes in his *Politics* for private property. I will present both those projects at conferences in October.

Student Clubs

Appalachian State University's Pre-Law Society

by Leah Mizelle

As most of us know very well, Philosophy is an incredibly rich and valuable subject of study, but there's not exactly an abundance of options after graduation. Pursuing a degree in Law after Philosophy is a path that is stricken with a bit of stigma but is largely underrated. It seems to me that law is largely overlooked by many who cannot envision themselves actively litigating for a career, however, many academics with law degrees never pursue a career in court rooms. Even if you have an idea of what you wish to pursue post-undergraduate, it is worthwhile to familiarize yourself with alternative paths. Attaining a J.D. has the potential to open many avenues that may appeal to you more than you might initially expect. It's also noteworthy that Philosophy majors consistently land in the top three in average LSAT scores. The skills we use to analyze and write Philosophy help us tremendously on the LSAT and condition us to perceive with a critical lens.

Because the Pre-Law Society is new to campus, we are sans limitations! Currently, we're building a database of information about the application process and options after graduation. Soon, we'll move to begin with activities, such as:

- LSAT study groups and FAQ's
- Resume workshops
- Guest speakers
- Debates
- Campus visits
- Seminars and colloquiums with other

organizations

Our meetings for this semester will be on Mondays at 8 p.m. and Tuesdays at 6 p.m. in Greer 219. We'll be running two meetings a week to cater to member availability, however, we'll only require mandatory (for active membership) meetings bi-weekly and on the weeks between the meetings will be narrowly focused for special interests and optional.

If you are unable to attend either of our weekly meeting times but are still interested, I'm willing to work with you to achieve active membership for the semester. Please contact me if you have any additional questions. If you're interested in joining, please contact me via email (below) and I will add you to the recipient list.
mizellel@appstate.edu

APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY



We meet every Thursday at 7pm in room 119 of I. G. Greer. Open to all majors and no dues! We encourage anyone who is interested in learning about philosophical ideas and influential figures. Most of us are beginners, so don't afraid to come check us out! Past topics have included everything from Descartes and normative ethics to anarchy and Harry Potter. For more information, contact Christina Falceto (falcetoch@appstate.edu)

Upcoming Highlights

September 30th - Dr. Bartel on the philosophy of ethics in video games

October - Dr. Robin James (UNCC) on pop music